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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/LOGGERFO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/15/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [KDEM](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: PRCS HEAD SAYS KEY MOU IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES
REMAIN UNRESOLVED

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. During a June 14 meeting in Ramallah with Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) president Yunis al-Khatib, the Consul General encouraged al-Khatib to work diligently to resolve the outstanding issues in advance of the June 20 International Conference of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent in Geneva. Al-Khatib said that key elements of the November 2005 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the Agreement on Operational Arrangements (AOA) between PRCS and Magen David Adom (MDA) remain unfulfilled. Al-Khatib said that he is particularly concerned with securing MDA and Government of Israel (GOI) recognition of the MOU provisions dealing with the geographic scope of MDA and PRCS activities. He said that the PRCS wanted to use existing West Bank drivers and technicians to operate ambulances in Jerusalem. End summary.

PRCS Head Disappointed
With Progress on MOU/AOA

¶2. (C) The Consul General emphasized to al-Khatib the importance of a successful outcome at the June 20 international conference in Geneva. While the USG understood that problems remain in the implementation of the MOU signed in November 2005 between the MDA and PRCS, it would prefer to use the time remaining before the conference to resolve them. MDA and PRCS entry into the movement should not be postponed further. Yunis responded that the final decision whether the Palestinians will support entry of the MDA will be a political one, adding that his main priority is to preserve the neutrality of the PRCS in the challenging political environment. Al-Khatib noted that the admission of the MDA under any circumstances is not popular among Palestinians due to ongoing Israeli military operations in the West Bank and Gaza. Furthermore, the failure of the GOI to fully implement the MOU has placed the PRCS in an untenable position due to the divisive nature of Palestinian politics.

¶3. (C) Al-Khatib said that his main concern is not issues relating to the Agreement of Operational Arrangements (AOA) -- which outline arrangements enabling PRCS ambulances access to East Jerusalem and freedom of movement in the West Bank and Gaza. Rather, al-Khatib views the provisions in the MOU which address the geographic scope of operations for the MDA as a main concern. He said he is unaware of progress on this issue. In line with the PRCS evaluation paper on implementation, he suggested that the MDA needs to amend its bylaws to conform to these provisions or send a letter to the PRCS explicitly confirming a commitment to do so. (Note: The

PRCS views all areas occupied by Israel in 1967 as falling under its geographic scope. End note.) Al-Khatib explained that progress on this issue would make it easier for the PRCS to be flexible on the ambulances and other issues falling under the AOA.

East Jerusalem

14. (C) Al-Khatib said that the PRCS had agreed to be pragmatic and include only those items in the AOA that were realistic, and which the MDA and Israeli MFA indicated they could implement. Regarding the stationing of PRCS ambulances in East Jerusalem, al-Khatib indicated that the PRCS preferred to use five new PRCS ambulances for its East Jerusalem operations. (Note: Al-Khatib mentioned that an additional 12 new PRCS ambulances have been stuck in Ashdod port for three months. End note.) However, the GOI insisted, and the PRCS eventually agreed, that PRCS will purchase five 2002-year models from the MDA for use in Jerusalem. Al-Khatib said that he also agreed to affix them with Israeli license plates. However, he objected to registering the ambulances with the Red Crescent Maternity Hospital, since there is no legal connection between the PRCS and the Hospital. Al-Khatib also insisted that drivers and technicians from the West Bank staff the vehicles in Jerusalem. (Note: The GOI has requested that only Jerusalem ID-card holders or Israeli citizens staff the ambulances. End note.) There are no existing PRCS personnel in Jerusalem that can operate the ambulances, al-Khatib said.

15. (C) The Consul General questioned whether a temporary solution might be possible, whereby the ambulances would be registered under the name of the Hospital while discussions proceeded on a long-term solution. Al-Khatib expressed skepticism that the GOI would agree to such terms, but noted

that progress on the outstanding MOU issues and/or assurances from the Swiss or USG on its implementation might help. He remarked that the AOA agreement allowing six ambulances and 22 drivers to enter Jerusalem from the West Bank had yet to be fully implemented. He said that a PRCS analysis indicated that those ambulances which attempted to enter Jerusalem in May and June were denied entry in approximately 70 percent of reported cases. This rejection occurred despite clearly-marked signs at the checkpoints permitting entry for the PRCS ambulances.

PRCS Funding

16. (C) Al-Khatib said that the situation for PRCS had grown increasingly difficult under the current international isolation of the Hamas-led PA. A significant portion of PRCS salaries (USD 850,000) comes from the PA. Through the ICRC and other international partners, such as the Norwegian and American Red Cross, al-Khatib had succeeded in securing approximately USD 10 million to cover operations, including salaries, through September 2006.

Travel To Geneva

17. (C) Al-Khatib said that he will depart the West Bank for Geneva on June 15 and plans to participate in a meeting of the Arab Group prior to the June 20 conference. The Consul General reiterated the importance of a constructive Palestinian approach to the meeting. Among the Arab Group, he urged the Palestinian team to stick to the relevant issues and not give ammunition to other participants who are intent on scuttling an agreement under any circumstances.

WALLES